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Source: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 7 (1953), pp. 67+69-97

Published by: [Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291056>

Accessed: 31/03/2013 00:07

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THE PATRIARCH PHOTIUS AND ICONOCLASM

FRANCIS DVORNIK

SO far it has been generally believed that the iconoclastic heresy was slowly dying out during the reign of Theophilus and that it was definitely liquidated in 843 when the Empress Theodora restored image worship. The fact that the Byzantine Church had instituted the feast of orthodoxy commemorating this event contributed to the spread of this belief.

When, however, we study in a more detailed way the circumstances in which image worship was restored, we find some occurrences which make us hesitate to accept the established opinion that iconoclasm was in evident decline when Theodora restored icon worship and that there was no further danger of a new iconoclastic outburst in Byzantium.

There is first the attitude of Theodora. We are surprised to learn from some accounts that she hesitated for more than a year to take the decisive step. This information comes from reports of the event found in all three historians — Simeon the Logothete, Genesius, and the Continuator of Theophanes.¹ Simeon the Logothete ascribes all the merit for the reestablishment of orthodoxy to Theoctistos, whom the dying Emperor appointed co-regent with Theodora, and who occupied the high post of the logothete of the drome — the title of the Byzantine minister of intelligence and of foreign affairs. The two other historians praise the Magister Manuel, Theodora's uncle, as the true restorer of the images. The Continuator of Theophanes lists also Theoctistos and Bardas among Theodora's advisers. According to this author, Manuel held the title of Magister. He was an Armenian by birth and uncle of the Empress. Genesius calls Manuel proto-Magister and mentions only Theoctistos in addition to him.

The reports concerning the role played by Manuel are not clear. Simeon the Logothete mentions a Magister Manuel who served under the last two iconoclastic emperors, Michael II and Theophilus, and who died in 838.² If this Manuel was promoted by the Continuator of Theophanes and by Genesius to a restorer of icon worship, then their information is incorrect.

Another important source — the biography of Saint David and his companions Saints Simeon and George³ — does not mention Manuel among Theodora's advisers. Instead of Magister Manuel, he speaks of Sergius of Niketia. This information seems more reliable than that given by the Con-

¹ Simeon the Logothete, Bonn, p. 647; the Continuator of Theophanes, Bonn, p. 148; Genesius, Bonn, p. 77.

² Bonn, p. 636.

³ Van den Gheyn, "Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii Mytilenae in insula Lesbo," *Analecta Bollandiana*, XVIII (1899), 243 sq.

tinuator of Theophanes and by Genesius. According to the Synaxary of Constantinople,⁴ the memory of a Magister Sergius, founder of a monastery in the Gulf of Nicomedia, was celebrated on June 28. Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence that the Sergius of the Synaxary should be identified with the Sergius mentioned in the biography. On the other hand, it should be stressed that Sergius of the Synaxary was also a native from Niketia and that he is called Theodora's relative.

H. Grégoire,⁵ who studied this problem quite thoroughly, proposed an ingenious explanation of the puzzle. He identified the Sergius mentioned by the biographer with the Magister Sergius listed in the Synaxary. Sergius' place in the restoration of image worship — so he argued — seems to have been taken in the later tradition by the iconoclast Magister Manuel, who was also the founder of a monastery in Constantinople. The monks of this monastery promoted their iconoclastic founder who died in 838 to a champion of image worship. This adjusted tradition was picked up by later writers — Genesius and the Continuator of Theophanes.

There is again no direct evidence supporting this daring explanation. We should, however, point out that, according to the Continuator of Theophanes, his hero Manuel was an iconoclast and was converted to the true faith by the monks of Studion who promised him recovery from a dangerous malady should he abandon his error. Manuel recovered and became a fervent defender of image worship. This story bears a legendary trait, a circumstance which weakens the author's reliability in this particular case and which strengthens the probability of H. Grégoire's thesis. Grégoire's explanation, in spite of lack of direct evidence, can thus be accepted as a reasonable hypothesis.

H. Grégoire volunteered further the opinion that this Sergius is no other than Photius' brother. This seems, a priori, not impossible. We know that Photius' family was related to the imperial house and that Photius had addressed several letters to "his brother Sergius." It is true that the Synaxary does not mention Sergius' relationship to Photius. This difficulty could be perhaps waved away by the assertion that the Synaxary was composed under Leo the Wise and that Photius was not in great favor with Leo, who had forced him to abdicate the patriarchal dignity.

There is, however, another objection to the identification of the Synaxary's Sergius with Photius' brother. We know from Photius' letter to the

⁴ A. S. (*Propylaeum ad A. S. Novembris*), p. 777.

⁵ "Études sur le neuvième siècle," *Byzantion*, VIII (1933), 517 sq., 530 sq. Cf. also H. Grégoire's remark in A. A. Vasiliev, H. Grégoire, H. Canard, *Byzance et les Arabes*, I (Bruxelles, 1935), 191 sq.

deacon George ⁶ that he himself, his father, and his uncle were anathematized by the iconoclasts. The circumstance that Photius does not mention his brother in this connection militates strongly against the above supposition. Moreover, if Photius' brother had played an important role in the reestablishment of orthodoxy, he would have been much older than Photius. This does not seem to have been the case.

Then there is another difficulty. The Synaxary discloses that the Magister Sergius was chosen by the Emperor Michael to lead an expedition against Crete, which was then in Arab hands. He died there and was buried in a church on the coast. His body was transferred later to the monastery he had founded. Michael III made an expedition against Crete in 866. We do not know, however, whether the story given by the Synaxary could be reconciled with the events which had taken place in 866. H. Grégoire was well aware of this difficulty, and on another occasion ⁷ he dated the expedition against Crete, mentioned in the Synaxary, from the year 843. It was Theoctistos who was the initiator of this expedition. This, however, does not contradict the version we read in the Synaxary. Michael, although a boy six or seven years old, was the rightful emperor and Theoctistos was acting in his stead. This new dating seems to be the correct one.

If this is so, then the person mentioned in the biography and in the Synaxary cannot be Photius' brother Sergius. Could he, however, be Photius' "uncle," mentioned by him in his letter to the monk George? Such a supposition is quite plausible, although we again cannot produce any direct evidence for this identification.⁸ If this interpretation is true, then the merits of Photius' family in the restoration of image worship were considerable.

One thing is established from all the above statements, namely, that Theodora had to be encouraged by her advisers not to fear to make the decisive step. The biographer of Saint David and his companions Saints Simeon and George gives the most details in this respect. He enumerates, besides Sergius, Theodora's brothers Bardas and Petronas and the Logothete Theoctistos as particularly active in favor of the reestablishment of orthodoxy. These men are said to have convinced the Empress that it would be safe enough to take the big plunge and to change the religious policy of her husband. It was a kind of family council. The preoccupation of Theodora and her relatives was to secure the interests of the dynasty. Because the Empress could count on the sympathies of the worshippers of images, Theo-

⁶ *Photii Epistolae*, II, *epist.* LXIV, *P.G.*, vol. 102, col. 877.

⁷ See H. Grégoire's footnote in *Byzance et les Arabes*, p. 195.

⁸ It should be pointed out that Simeon the Logothete says that Photius' father's name was Sergius (Bonn, p. 668). This does not exclude the possibility that another relative of Photius whom he calls "uncle" bore the same name as his father.

dora's hesitations can be explained only by her fear of a new iconoclastic reaction which could become fatal to her and her young son Michael III. The influence of the iconoclasts was still great and their strength was far from broken. The regency knew it and therefore proceeded with the utmost caution.

This is also demonstrated by the way in which the Empress treated the iconoclastic Patriarch John (called also Ἰαννῆς). The same historical document — the life of Saints Simeon, David, and George⁹ — gives us some interesting details concerning the iconoclastic patriarch, details which illustrate the situation in Byzantium before the proclamation of Orthodoxy. We learn from the biographer that the heretical patriarch continued to be in office for more than a year after Theodora had assumed the regency. He is said also to have distributed money among the clergy in order to secure their support for himself and for his religious teaching. On his proposition, a religious discussion on image worship was held in the imperial palace. The representative of the orthodox party in this discussion was the monk Methodius, the future patriarch. Of course, he was proclaimed victorious over the heretic John. The Patriarch is said to have asked also for a private discussion with the monk Simeon in the presence of the Empress. There are some legendary traits in the biographer's account. But one thing is clear: that the Patriarch John was in office for all this time and that he did all he could for the defense of his iconoclastic views.

We learn further from this source that when Theodora had made the decision to establish orthodoxy, everything was done according to canonical prescriptions. After the public discussion, a local council was convoked, and we are authorized to suppose that, before its convocation, the Patriarch was invited to attend it. He refused to abandon his religious opinion. He was therefore deposed by the council, and the monk Methodius elected in his stead. Instead of banishing the iconoclastic ex-patriarch to an island or to Asia Minor, Theodora let him live quietly, probably in his own property, called Psicha,¹⁰ near the monastery in Kleidion not far from Constantinople, on the European side of the Bosphorus.

Then there is the condition laid down by Theodora before she gave her consent to the reestablishment of orthodoxy: that the memory of her husband would not be condemned. It is true that Theodora was a pious lady

⁹ Van den Gheyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 245 sq. Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London, 1912), pp. 143 sq.

¹⁰ This information is given by the Continuator of Theophanes (Bonn, p. 151), and it should be preferred to that given by Simeon the Logothete and by the Continuator of George the Monk (Bonn, pp. 649, 811). Cf. Bury, *op. cit.*, pp. 151 sq. and my book, *Les Légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague, 1933), pp. 71 sq.

who had loved her husband dearly. This reason could be regarded as sufficient and satisfactory to explain her attitude. But there may have been other considerations. Theodora and her councilors might have feared that a public anathematization of the memory of the late Emperor Theophilus, who was worshipped by the iconoclasts and was in great esteem also among the orthodox, would exasperate his followers, who were still numerous and could endanger the position of the Empress. We know that there was a party of intransigent monks who insisted on the anathematization of Theophilus' memory. The Continuator of Theophanes¹¹ depicts in vivid colors a very dramatic incident which happened during the banquet the Empress had organized in honor of the monks who had suffered persecution during the iconoclastic controversy. Two of the heroes – Theodorus and Theophanes – stood up and declared that they would call Theodora's husband before the tribunal of God for the wounds he had inflicted on them. Their confrère Simeon¹² is said to have particularly opposed Theodora's plea for her husband's memory, and to have thrown the money offered to him by the Empress, allegedly as the Emperor's legacy, into the face of the Empress with the angry words: "To perdition with him and his money." The intervention of Sergius and all the other most important men of the government – Theoctistos, Bardas, and Petronas – was necessary to break the zealot's opposition. Mollified by the insistence of so many important personages and by the intercession of some of his confrères, Simeon yielded, and then he remembered that the late Emperor had appeared to him, in a dream, of course, and begged humbly, "Good monk, have pity upon me."¹³

In order to calm the orthodox zealots, rumors were spread among the people that the late Emperor had repented before his death. Later a legend developed that Theophilus' name miraculously was erased from the list of iconoclastic heretics laid on an altar by the Patriarch Methodius.¹⁴ All these stories show that Theodora must have had very serious reasons when making such conditions for the reestablishment of orthodoxy. It was not only her love for her husband but also her desire not to hurt unnecessarily the feelings of the iconoclasts which induced her to do so.

The policy of the regency was to lessen the danger of a new iconoclastic reaction by lenient treatment of the iconoclasts and to bring back to orthodoxy at least the moderate heretics. Because of that policy, Methodius, who had found protection at the court of Theophilus, thanks to his erudition,

¹¹ Theoph. Contin., IV, ch. 11, Bonn, pp. 160 sq. Cf. my book, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX^e siècle* (Paris, 1926), p. 127.

¹² Van den Gheyn, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

¹³ Van den Gheyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 246 sq.

¹⁴ See, for details, Bury, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 sq.

was selected for the patriarchal office, although there were many candidates for the honor among the extremists who thought that they had greater merit and had fought better against iconoclasm than had Methodius.¹⁵ The bishops and the clergy who professed their repentance of the heresy and who had not been ordained by an iconoclastic bishop were simply left in their posts. A particularly striking example of this liberal policy was the case of Leo the Mathematician, Archbishop of Thessalonica. As Leo had naturally been ordained by iconoclast prelates, he was replaced by an orthodox bishop, but because he was one of the most prominent scholars of the period, he got the important post of professor of philosophy at the Imperial University. It seems that Leo rather welcomed the change he was making, because he was, at heart, a scholar and preferred scholarly work to the episcopal office.

I have shown in my book on the Photian schism¹⁶ that the new Patriarch Methodius studiously avoided appointing as bishops men of extremist views, knowing well that the radical measures against the heretics, advocated by the zealots, would only strengthen their resistance and increase the danger of a new iconoclastic reaction. The regency and the Patriarch wanted to bring about a peaceful liquidation of the heresy because they knew that iconoclastic sympathizers were still many.

The main inspirer of this policy was most probably the Logothete Theocistos, who himself had been an iconoclast. He had faithfully served the late Emperor Theophilus, and belonged most probably to the moderate party among the iconoclasts. Since he was intimately associated with the Emperor, he must have known the real strength of the iconoclasts. His example was certainly followed by many moderate iconoclasts, and he knew that only a liberal policy towards the heretics could avoid new complications.

But this policy was severely criticized by the extremists, who found leaders among the monks of the famous monastery of Studion. In spite of this, Methodius persisted in his policy, and, when his opponents became too noisy in their criticism of the regularly established hierarchy, he refused to give them any concession but, on the contrary, went so far as to excommunicate them. This again seems to be rather puzzling. It would not have been difficult to appease this opposition by appointing some of its members to higher ecclesiastical posts. Some of them had manifested great courage during the iconoclastic persecution, and deserved a promotion after the reestablishment of orthodoxy. If Methodius preferred the danger of a schism among the orthodox to the change of his ecclesiastical policy concerning the iconoclasts, he must have had very serious reasons for his attitude. He was

¹⁵ I discussed it in detail in my book, *Les Slaves*, pp. 128 sq.

¹⁶ *The Photian Schism, History and Legend* (London, 1949), pp. 13 sq.

not a petty man who would take offense at some criticism, nor was he an autocratic and harsh man; on the contrary, he is known for his mildness and liberal views. I see only one reason for his surprising decision in the affair of the monks of Studion — his fear of a new iconoclastic reaction, should the advocates of strong measures against the heretics win their cause. He could read the lesson of history. He knew what happened during the reign of Michael I, who left too much influence to the zealous monks of Studion and was not discreet enough in his orthodox propaganda.¹⁷ A violent iconoclastic reaction followed, Michael was dethroned, and Leo V the Armenian was proclaimed Emperor. Methodius was determined to preclude the possibility of a new iconoclastic reaction.

It is probable that Methodius would have been fully successful and would have broken the opposition of the extremist monks, had he lived longer. But he died June 14, 847, after having been Patriarch for only four years. His death placed the regency in a very difficult situation. There was a schism in the Church, the most ardent defenders of image worship, the monks of Studion and their supporters having been excommunicated. The extremists were agitating among clergy and people, and the moderates were insisting on the necessity of continuing Methodius' religious policy. Theodora did not dare convoke the local synod, which, according to the eastern custom, should elect a patriarch and recommend him to the regency for confirmation. She was afraid of new agitations and complications. She therefore made use of the right of the emperors to appoint bishops, a right which was always basically recognized, although the canonical procedure of election by a local synod was preferred and mostly in use. She elevated to the patriarchal throne the son of the orthodox Emperor Michael I, Nicetas — now the monk Ignatius.¹⁸ This choice was evidently meant as a concession to the extremists, but because Ignatius had not been involved in the controversy between Methodius and the Studites, it was hoped that he would be acceptable also to the defenders of the moderate policy.

The new Patriarch proved, however, that he was, basically, a partisan of the extremists' views, and the latter soon became masters of church affairs. The moderates, led by Asbestas, bishop of Syracuse, being disappointed, called Ignatius a parricide,¹⁹ thus signifying that he had abandoned the tactics of his predecessor Methodius whom he should have venerated as his father. We know the sad result of this controversy. Ignatius, who after his

¹⁷ Cf. my book *Les Slaves*, pp. 37 sq. Cf. my book, *The Photian Schism*, pp. 12, 68.

¹⁸ For details on Ignatius' nomination without the usual canonical procedure, see my book, *The Photian Schism*, p. 81.

¹⁹ Anastasius' introduction to his translation of the Acts of the Ignatian synod of 869–870 (Mansi, XVI, cols. 2, 3). Cf. my book, *The Photian Schism*, pp. 23 sq.

enthronization had recalled into the Church the excommunicated extremists, launched, at their instigation, a sentence of excommunication against the leaders of the moderates.

The position of the extremists in the Church and in the State was strengthened further by the political evolution. Theoctistos soon got a dangerous rival in the person of Theodora's brother Bardas. The latter was, so it seems, afraid that Theoctistos might become another Staurakios, the main adviser of the Empress Irene, who had also restored image worship. Bardas was apprehensive lest Theoctistos induce Theodora to put aside the young Emperor Michael III just as Irene had deposed her son Constantine VI.²⁰ Since Bardas and Michael had most of their sympathizers among the moderates, Theoctistos was forced, for political reasons, to look for support among the extremists. The latter thus became the dominant party in the Church and in the State. Theodora herself, by her natural inclination, was fond of the pious, extremist monks, and so it came about that a situation arose in Byzantium similar to that which had existed under the reign of the orthodox Emperor Michael I. Many open-minded men looked at this evolution with apprehensions, fearing new complications with the iconoclasts, more or less sincerely converted, who disliked the growing influence of the monks and the unrelenting policy of the new Patriarch.

Unfortunately, we have no direct indications concerning the former iconoclasts and the reactions which the new policy provoked among them. All contemporary writers were interested only in the conflict between Bardas and Theoctistos and the consequences which resulted from it: the assassination of Theoctistos, the relegation of Theodora to a convent, the assumption of the government by Michael III and Bardas, the abdication of Ignatius, and the election of Photius as Patriarch.

It would be pointless to go into details and to describe how the extremists, although they had also recognized Photius as the legitimate Patriarch, had revolted against him and had declared Ignatius again as the legitimate head of the Byzantine Church. A detailed discussion of all those upheavals will be found in my book on the Photian schism.²¹ There is, however, one thing which should be particularly stressed and which is directly connected with the problem we are studying here. The rebellious attitude of the extremists had been condemned by Photius in two local synods in 859. The first of these assembled in the Church of the Holy Apostles and, when this assembly had been dissolved because of an open revolt of the zealots, the second met

²⁰ Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, II (London, 1889), 480 sq. Also Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, pp. 1 sq.

²¹ Pages 39 sq.

in the Church of Blachernae. The Emperor Michael III then sent a solemn embassy to Rome, asking the Pope to dispatch legates to Constantinople to a council which should once more publicly condemn the iconoclastic heresy. Unfortunately, the imperial letter sent to the Pope is lost. We are in possession only of the synodical letter of the Patriarch which was forwarded to the Pope by the same embassy, and which naturally does not mention the convocation of the synod, because this was strictly a matter which concerned the emperor alone.²² We can reconstruct, however, the main points of Michael's letter from the answer to the Emperor's missive sent by the Pope.²³ The Pope outlined in his letter the Catholic doctrine on images which indicates that this matter must have been stressed particularly in the Emperor's message.

The fact that the Emperor really requested the Pope to send legates to the council which should be convoked in Constantinople for the purpose of a final condemnation of the iconoclastic heresy is furthermore attested by the *Synodicum Vetus*,²⁴ a treatise on councils composed by a contemporary Ignatian supporter. It is also attested by the Papal Librarian Anastasius in the part of the *Liber Pontificalis*²⁵ describing the life of the Pope Nicolas.

Of course, both authors claim that this was only a pretext and that the real purpose of the Emperor and of Photius was to get, by this subterfuge, a new condemnation of Ignatius with the connivance of the papal legates. This interpretation was accepted by most of the historians. I think I have succeeded in showing in my book on the Photian schism²⁶ that this interpretation is biased, and that for the Byzantines the case of Ignatius was definitely settled in the two local synods mentioned above. The Emperor never thought of a new, more solemn condemnation of Ignatius. The affair of Ignatius was discussed and judged during the new council only because the Pope wanted it, and, as a concession to the Byzantine point of view, the legates had to pronounce the definite judgment in Constantinople before reporting to the Pope.

Why then did Michael III want to have a new condemnation of iconoclasm in 861? Only because the heresy was still rampant in Byzantium and because the regime of the zealot monks during the patriarchate of Ignatius made a new iconoclastic reaction a possibility. It is a pity that the Acts of the Council of 861 were destroyed by the order of the Ignatian synod of

²² *Photii Epistolae*, I, ep. 1, P.G., vol. 102, cols. 585 sq.

²³ *Mon. German. Hist., Epistolae*, VI, pp. 433 sq.

²⁴ Published by J. Pappe in J. A. Fabricius and G. C. Harles, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, XII (Hamburg, 1809), 417, 418.

²⁵ Ed. L. Duchesne (Paris, 1886, 1892), II, 154 sq.

²⁶ Pages 70 sq.

869–870. We have only a Latin extract of the first part of the Acts containing the minutes of the process made against Ignatius. It is preserved in the Collection of Canon Law written by Cardinal Deusdedit in the eleventh century.²⁷ Unfortunately, the copyist who made these extracts from the Latin translation of the Acts kept in the Archives of the Lateran was not at all interested in the iconoclastic controversy, and, therefore, he did not copy a single sentence from the second part of the Acts.

We have only the text of seventeen canons, voted by the Council at the end of its sessions, which have been preserved because of their importance in Byzantine canon law.²⁸ This is our only directive if we want to guess, at least in most general lines, what was the subject of conciliar discussions or what were the main reasons for the fears that an iconoclastic reaction was not impossible.

It is a remarkable thing that the first seven canons voted by the synod deal with various problems which concern the monastic life. This can be taken as an indication of the main subject of the conciliar deliberations. Some wordings of the canons betray, moreover, that the Council was trying to remove abuses which must have crept into monastic institutions only recently.

For example, the first canon starts with the words: “The building of monasteries which is such a sublime and honorable practice and which was, in the old days, so well regulated by our holy and blessed fathers, is done wrongly in our days.” Then the canon describes how rich people transform their houses into monasteries, declaring that they dedicate their property to God, but that, in spite of this dedication, they dispose of the property as if it were still theirs, selling it and giving it to whom they please. Therefore, the Council decreed that in the future a monastic foundation could be made only with the permission of a bishop. The property given to a monastery was to be surrendered to him, and a detailed record of it was to be deposited in the episcopal archives.

The second canon deals with an abuse which is a logical consequence of the practice condemned in the first canon. Some people become monks only to share the honors and privileges of the monastic vocation. After they have been invested with the monastic garb, they continue to live in their own houses, without submitting to any monastic discipline and without any monastic superior. This practice was strictly forbidden in the future. The consecration of a monk was allowed only when he consented to be placed under the authority of an abbot legitimately established.

²⁷ Cf. my book, *The Photian Schism*, pp. 28 sq.

²⁸ Text in Mansi, *Concil. Ampliss. Collectio*, XVI, cols. 536–49.

These two canons show clearly that, during Ignatius' tenure, the monks had regained the esteem and influence they used to have before the outbreak of the iconoclastic heresy. It was regarded as the greatest honor for a believer to be associated in some way with the monachism and to participate in its honor and privileges. And so the abuses described in the canons crept into the ninth century's monasticism, and spread to a wide extent.

This practice not only discredited this venerable institution in the eyes of many, but it was dangerous also in another respect. Let us remember that the first iconoclastic emperors were trying to reduce the influence of monasticism, not only because monks were the most zealous propagators of image worship, but also for economic reasons. There is enough evidence to show that during the iconoclastic period monastery lands were ruthlessly confiscated. It is also known that Constantine V, especially, discouraged rich people from retiring to monasteries at the end of their careers or from bequeathing their properties to ecclesiastical institutions.²⁹ The abuses which the Photian Council of 861 tried to extirpate existed in pre-iconoclastic days, and gave the iconoclastic emperors welcome pretexts to eradicate such excesses by forceful means.³⁰ We can imagine that this action of iconoclastic emperors found much applause among the population. It was apparent that many foundations of this kind were made, not so much for religious motives as to get exemptions from various state obligations. The emperors could not tolerate such practices in the interest of the State.

The establishment of orthodoxy in 843 was, of course, a great victory of Byzantine monachism. It was thus to be expected that monasteries would flourish once more. There was a danger that some zealous believers and monks might be tempted to go too far in their enthusiasm for monastic ideals. During the patriarchate of Methodius this danger was lessened by his prudent policy. The monks did not relish this restraint, as we have seen, and they regained their influence under Ignatius. Soon the abuses against which the iconoclastic emperors had fought appeared again. The iconoclasts and the more or less sincere converts viewed the spread of such practices with growing resentment and distaste. Iconoclastic propaganda was finding its best arguments there. Should such a situation continue, the danger of a new iconoclastic reaction would increase. Photius and his supporters saw it and tried to reform monasticism by canonical means.

²⁹ See, for details, Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, II, 460 sq. A. A. Vasiliev, "On the Question of Byzantine Feudalism," *Byzantion*, VIII (1933), 598 sq.

³⁰ It should be remembered that the Seventh Oecumenical Council also paid special attention to the reform of monasticism (Mansi, XIII, cols. 417 sq.; canons XIII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII).

The five following canons voted by the Council of 861 reveal the same tendency. In the third canon the abbots are reminded that their duty is to take good care of the religious progress of their subordinates. The fourth censures those monks who leave their monasteries without permission or take up residence in lay people's houses. The latter practice, the canon states, was allowed in the period of persecution but cannot be tolerated now when the Church lives in peace. The wording of the canon again permits the interpretation that this practice had increased recently and that it may be considered in connection with the abuses censured in the first and second canons. It was natural that the laymen who were transforming their houses into monasteries were anxious to have in their houses a real monk in order to give their new "institutions" a more monastic character.

In order to enforce the first two canons, the Council's fifth canon orders that everyone who has the intention of embracing the monastic life must live under the guidance of an experienced religious man for three years. The sixth canon enforces the obligation of poverty for every monk; candidates must dispose of their property before entering a monastery. The last forbids bishops to found new monasteries and to endow them with revenue from the bishopric.

This is all that was saved from the anti-iconoclastic decrees voted by the Council of 861. It is not much, but it is sufficient to show that eighteen years after the reestablishment of orthodoxy iconoclasm was not yet completely eradicated and that monastic abuses which had increased during Ignatius' patriarchate had made the danger of an iconoclastic reaction a possibility.

Photius seems to have tried to diminish this danger also in other ways. We have to view the reorganization of the patriarchal academy by Photius³¹ in connection with his endeavor to reform the monks. The philosophical training of the future clergy apparently was neglected during Ignatius' patriarchate. Extremist monks were always hostile to the teaching of philosophy. And again this attitude was not relished by the former iconoclasts who still remembered the interest which their last emperor Theophilus used to show in learning. Photius saw it, and the reorganization of the patriarchal academy was his first preoccupation after the conclusion of the conciliar debates. He chose the Church of the Holy Apostles as the seat of the Faculty of Philosophy of his reorganized academy. The dean of the faculty — if such a title may be used — was one of Photius' best disciples, Constantine-Cyril, the future Apostle of the Slavs. The learned Patriarch knew well that only

³¹ For details see my study, "Photius et la réorganisation de l'Académie Patriarchal," *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXVIII (1951), 108–125.

a clergy well trained in theology and philosophy would be able to avoid the shallow waters of zealotism and fanaticism which always led to narrow-mindedness and provoked a strong reaction from the opponents.

Let us recall, in this connection, a story which we read in the biography of the same Constantine. In chapter five ³² a charming scene is depicted – a discussion which the young Constantine is said to have had on icon worship about the year 850 with the iconoclastic ex-Patriarch, John the Grammarian. The discussion is presented as a kind of examination. The Emperor is supposed to have said to Constantine, “If you can defeat him, young man, you will get your chair” (of philosophy at the university).

There are, of course, legendary traits in this account. It should be stressed, however, that the biographer was a Slav brought up in Byzantium and that he wrote the *Life* under the direction of Constantine’s brother Methodius. He left Byzantium with the two brothers for Moravia in 862, thus soon after the Council of 861. His interest in the ex-Patriarch John and in iconoclasm shows clearly that this problem was still of lively importance in Byzantium at that period. The *Life* was written in old Slavonic in Moravia between 873 and 880 most probably. It is characteristic to note how anxious the biographer is to present Constantine as victorious in his disputation with John. He uses this opportunity to refute the main objections of the iconoclasts against the worship of images and of the cross. There was little danger of iconoclasm in Moravia, and the new Slavic converts were not much interested in the Byzantine heresiarch. The biographer sensed, however, although far from his homeland, the tense atmosphere he had breathed in the sixties when he lived in Byzantium. He was, therefore, very anxious to preserve his new converts from any iconoclastic danger because he knew how real this danger was in his time in Byzantium.

A similar attitude was taken by Photius himself when he wrote, about the year 865, his famous long letter to the other Byzantine convert, the Khagan Boris of Bulgaria.³³ The Patriarch reviews for the new Christian ruler, among other things, the decisions of the seven Oecumenical Councils, because they are the basis of the orthodox faith. His account of the Seventh Oecumenical Council, which had condemned iconoclasm, is the longest. The Patriarch takes great care to refute all the objections of the iconoclasts against the pictorial representation of Christ, and against the worship of images and of the cross. His account betrays how much he was preoccupied with the iconoclastic problem in the time when he wrote the letter. Because

³² See my French translation of the *Life* in my book, *Les Légendes de Constantin et de Méthode*, pp. 353 sq. It is possible that the *Life* was composed by Methodius himself.

³³ *Photii Epistolae*, I, *epis.* 8, *P.G.*, vol. 102, cols. 649–56.

the danger of iconoclasm had not yet disappeared in Byzantium, Photius took great pains to preserve his new converts from any such taint.

Only when the main program of Photius' countermeasures against the iconoclastic danger was well on the way could the Patriarch engage in the final stage of the anti-iconoclastic reaction — the decoration of the main churches with mosaics and pictures of the saints. It seems that, in this respect, the Patriarchs Methodius and Ignatius both remained faithful to the policy of discretion. It is surprising to learn from one homily of Photius, pronounced on the occasion of the inauguration of an icon of Our Lady in Hagia Sophia,³⁴ that this mosaic was the first one solemnly inaugurated in 867, in the presence of the Emperor Michael III and his associate Basil. This fact is rather astonishing. Photius' declaration completely shatters the belief, so far generally accepted, that icons appeared everywhere in Byzantium after the reestablishment of orthodoxy. It seems that in reality the authorities were rather anxious to go slowly in this matter for fear of provoking a reaction from the iconoclasts.

It appears that not even the measures advocated by Photius had succeeded in countering the iconoclastic danger. In any case, it is surprising to learn that even the Ignatian Council of 869–870, so far called the Eighth Oecumenical Council, found it necessary to condemn iconoclasm once more and to pronounce a new anathema over the heads of some notorious iconoclasts. We find most interesting details illustrating the survival of iconoclasm to that time in the Acts of the eighth conciliar session.³⁵ The head of the iconoclasts was Theodore Crithinus. He was summoned to appear before the Council, and the order was presented to him by the representative of the Emperor at the Council's meetings, Baanes himself. Theodore ignored the summons, and when he was asked by Baanes why he was ready to venerate the Emperor's picture on coins but refused to venerate Christ's image, the heretical leader said: "You see without any doubt that the coin you showed me reproduces the picture of the Emperor. You ask me to accept and to venerate also the picture of Christ. But I know not if such is Christ's order, and if it would be agreeable to him."

The Latin translation of the Acts made by Anastasius Bibliothecarius is even more explicit on the subject. When the assembly learned that Crithinus had refused to abjure the heresy, the Emperor himself intervened, asking the Council to admit three followers of Crithinus, the cleric Nicetas and two laymen, Theophilus and Theophanes, who evidently had shown their inten-

³⁴ See my "Lettre à M. H. Grégoire à propos de Michel III," *Byzantion*, X (1935), 5–9.

³⁵ Mansi, XVI, cols. 139 sq., 388 sq.

tion to abandon the heresy. They were introduced before the assembly, and after they had abjured the heresy and anathematized all heretical patriarchs and Crithinus, the Emperor himself embraced each of them and expressed his satisfaction at their conversion.³⁶

One has the impression, when reading this passage of the Acts, that the whole scene was prearranged in order to impress other iconoclasts and to invite them to follow the example of the three converts. Such a public display of imperial favors towards three insignificant men was certainly something exceptional. It shows again that there were still many iconoclasts, and that the Emperor Basil was anxious to win them over to orthodoxy.

But, in spite of the efforts of the Emperor, there were still many who continued to display more or less publicly their hostility to image worship, as is indicated by the wording of the anathemas pronounced by the fathers against the iconoclasts at the end of the eighth session. The anathemas were directed first against the iconoclastic council — “which is still fighting against the holy images” — and against all iconoclastic patriarchs. Then the list continued: “To Paul, who was converted into Saul, and Theodore who was called Gastas, Stephen Molatas and men similar to him, anathema. To Theodore, the unreasonable who pretends to talk reasonably and who is called Crithinus, anathema. To them who still are in doubt [about the cult of images] and are losing their reasoning in their ambiguity and who, engulfed in the darkness of their iniquity, are suspected by some to have reverted [to the heresy], anathema. To Laludius, Leo and to all who think as them, whether they are numbered among bishops, priests, or monks and whatever degree of holy orders they had attained, anathema.”

The list of notorious iconoclasts is here considerably longer than in the anathemas of the Seventh Oecumenical Council. One has the impression that Paul “who became a Saul,” Theodore Gastas, and Stephen Molatas (Moltes) were prominent heretics who sided with the last iconoclast, the former Patriarch John, and who followed him also in the refusal to abandon the heresy. Since Theodore Crithinus is regarded in 870 as the leader of the iconoclasts, it appears that John the Grammarian was already dead at that time. Laludius and Leo are new names, two prominent partisans of Crithinus. The rest of the wording shows clearly that many conversions were not sincere and that the heresy had still numerous sympathizers among bishops, priests, monks, and laymen. Therefore the Council thought it necessary to renew in the third canon voted at the end an emphatic condemnation of the iconoclastic heresy; to repeat, in the solemn synodical decree, the

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, col. 142.

main anathemas; and to refute some subtle arguments of the iconoclasts. The Acts of the Ignatian Council make it thus evident that in 870 the heresy was far from suppressed.

The Council of 869–870 was a triumph of the zealous extremists over Photius and the moderates. One could thus expect that now, after a new and energetic condemnation of the heresy, the Ignatians would do everything to decorate the churches with sacred images and mosaics. But again the progress of the redecoration was not as rapid as could have been expected. The fathers of the Ignatian Council were responsible for the delay. Archaeologists and historians interested in this period have overlooked a canon voted by the Council which is of considerable importance for our study. This is what was decreed in the Greek version of canon seven: “It is most useful to create holy and venerable images and to teach men the disciplines of divine and human wisdom. But this should not be done by unworthy men. Therefore we decree that the men who are condemned and separated from the Church by an anathema should neither paint holy images in the churches nor should they teach in any place as long as they do not abandon their error. Therefore if anyone, after the publication of this our decree, would admit them to the painting of holy images in the churches or would give them any opportunity to teach, if he is a cleric, he should be suspended, and if he is a layman, he should be excluded from the Church and deprived of the use of the holy sacraments.”³⁷

This canon confirms first of all, as we have already indicated, that Photius and his supporters displayed, during his first patriarchate, a remarkable activity in the redecoration of churches with icons. It is thus suggested that Photius had succeeded in gathering around him a number of good artists and that the redecoration of the churches was well on its way, thanks to his initiative. The continuation of this artistic activity was now forbidden to the Photianists. When we remember that Photianists had an overwhelming majority in Byzantium, that Photius’ supporters remained for the most part faithful to the exiled Patriarch, and, further, that the Council, because of the attitude of the papal legates, was on the whole unpopular and disappointed even the expectation of Basil I, we are justified in concluding that artistic activity in Byzantium suffered a considerable setback because of the decree forbidding Photianists to participate in the redecoration of churches.³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid.*, cols. 402 sq., 164 (Latin version).

³⁸ This does not mean that Ignatius did nothing for the decoration of churches with mosaics and icons. One manuscript of George Cedrenus’ *Compendium of History* (Bonn, p. 238) attributes the decoration of the Church of Sergius and Bacchus by Basil I to the exhortations of the Patriarch Ignatius.

As I have shown in my book on the Photian schism,³⁹ the rapprochement between Photius and the Emperor, who was disillusioned by the rigorist attitude of the extremists, started soon. It may be that Basil I had another reason for trying to appease the Photianists and their leader. We have seen that Basil was anxious to promote the liquidation of the iconoclastic heresy. His attitude during the eighth session of the Ignatian Council shows this clearly. It was to be expected that the troubles among the defenders of orthodoxy, now split into two parties – the extremist and the moderate – did not promote the liquidation of iconoclasm. On the contrary, the victory of the extremists over the moderates made their resistance more stubborn. We have to remember that the converts from iconoclasm sided rather with the moderates for reasons which are easy to grasp. All this made the situation more tense and Basil's position more difficult. He could not allow the split among the orthodox to be complicated by a new iconoclastic recrudescence.

It is remarkable that in one of his letters to Photius, then still in exile, but under better conditions, Basil asked the former Patriarch to give him some explanation of theological problems. One of the problems on which Basil wanted to have thorough information was that concerning the main arguments used by the iconoclasts against representing God or Christ by pictures. No one so far had seen God. Therefore, since God is invisible, he cannot be represented in pictures and images. Photius' answer to this question is published in his *Amphilochia*.⁴⁰ We know, however, that many pieces of this collection are simply Photius' letters, copied verbally, but without the name of the addressees. B. Laourdas, who is working on a new edition of Photius' letters, to be published by Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University, found Photius' discussion on this problem in the Manuscript *Iveron* 684, which is a collection of the Patriarchal letters, among the letters addressed to the Emperor Basil, under the following title: "To the great Emperor Basil, when he started writing and when he asked for the solution of some problems."

Photius explains to his imperial correspondent the correct orthodox doctrine in this matter, and demonstrates it by quotations from the Holy Writ and from the Fathers, the guardians of catholic tradition. It is true that Photius does not mention iconoclasm in his exposé, but nevertheless the connection of this problem with iconoclasm is clear. We can deduce from this letter that iconoclastic argumentation preoccupied the Emperor even after the Council of 869–870, and that he missed, in the fight against rampant

³⁹ Pages 159 sq., 170 sq. (reconciliation with Ignatius).

⁴⁰ *Ad Amphilochiam Quaestio CXIX*, P.G., vol. 101, cols. 696 sq.

iconoclasm, the help which the brilliant mind of the former Patriarch could give.

This letter to Basil is posterior to the other two letters which Photius had addressed to him at the beginning of his exile. It might have been written in 872. If so, it shows that Basil started soon to change his mind about Photius. In any case, from 873 on, the former Patriarch was back in Constantinople, in the imperial palace, directing the education of the Emperor's children and, probably, teaching again at Magnaura University. A complete reconciliation between Photius and Ignatius took place not later than 876. From that time on, if not from 873 when Photius was recalled from exile, we may suggest, the decree of the Ignatian Council concerning the artistic activity of the Photianists might have been applied less rigorously. But it was only during the second patriarchate of Photius, from the end of 877 on, that the new Byzantine religious art witnessed a period of flourishing renaissance.

Photius remained very much alive to the theological and philosophical problems which were raised by the iconoclasts. We can read in his *Amphilochia* eight other discussions of problems connected with iconoclasm. The fact that Photius comes back so often to those problems is significant in itself and shows how much the Patriarch was preoccupied with the iconoclastic danger. But there is more. As B. Laourdas will show in his edition of Photius' letters, most of those "answers" were written first by Photius to friends who had asked him for advice. Later he included them, without the names of the addressees, in his collection of *Amphilochia*. A comparison of the *Amphilochia* with the oldest manuscript of Photius' letters — the *Baroccianus Graecus* 217, of the first half of the tenth century, a copy of an older manuscript written by one of Arethas' pupils — shows that the letters were addressed to the following men: one letter (*Amph.* 87) to Eyschymon, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia; three letters (*Amph.* 196, 197, 217) to John Chrysocheris, spatharios and protospatharios; one (*Amph.* 111) to Stephen, probably a convert; one (*Amph.* 205) to the Abbot Theodore; and one (*Amph.* 221) to Constantine the Patrician.

These findings show how much the iconoclastic problem was debated in Byzantium during the patriarchates of Photius. Men in high rank and ecclesiastics, mostly Photius' friends, asked the learned Patriarch for explanation of some difficult problems posed by the iconoclasts. The fact that Photius included these answers in his collection, *Amphilochia*, demonstrates once more his anxiety to provide every one who might in the future be in difficulties with the necessary material — both profound and popular — against iconoclastic propaganda.

We detect a strong echo of this anxiety also in Photius' homilies. There are two homilies which are of a special interest in this respect. They were both delivered, as the titles indicate, from the ambo of Hagia Sophia, and were parts of a series of homilies having for their object the historical account of the origin, spread, and refutation of Arianism. In the first homily Photius explains the attitude of the Church towards Arius, who was first accepted, in spite of his deposition, because he pretended to repent, but later rejected because his repentance proved to be insincere. Then Photius compares the attitude of Alexander of Constantinople, and of his namesake of Alexandria, towards Arius with that of the Patriarch Nicephorus towards the iconoclastic Patriarch John the Grammarian. The passage is of some importance, as Photius gives some detailed information on John which has been hitherto overlooked.

"The Church, which prescribes pardon, gladly received Arius when he abandoned his former error; but when he had drifted many times into the same madness, although he simulated a recantation by a repentance tract, yet, foreseeing his deceitful and sly character, and providing in advance that piety should not be held in contempt, it did not consent in any wise to open to him the gates of mercy, which he had wretchedly shut in his own face. This [attitude] our contemporary also, the fitly-named Nicephorus, has imitated with divine wisdom: for as the blessed Alexander received Arius, so Nicephorus received John (who was awarded this throne as a prize for his impiety), who formerly had clung to piety (for he too was a worshipper of the venerable images, and actually used the art of the painter as the profession of his life), but later because of times and tribulations had stepped over to impiety and fallen into that disease, and offered a tract of repentance. But when he went astray again and aspired to be proclaimed the leader of a heresy — just as neither Alexander nor God's Church shed a single drop of mercy on Arius feigning repentance — so the wondrous Nicephorus with a prophetic eye barred the entrance of the Church to John and his fellow-leaders of the heresy who had committed the same folly against the Church, even if they would assume the mask of repentance — asserting that their conversion would be unacceptable both to God and to the Church. But to what extent the heresy of the iconoclasts resembles the Arian craze will be expounded, with God's help, in proper time."⁴¹

This Photius did in the second homily. After enumerating the errors of

⁴¹ S. Aristarchis, *Photii Orationes et Homiliae*, II (Constantinopoli, 1900), 256 seq. I quote the passages of this and the following homilies from the new edition of Photius' homilies which will be published by Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University. The new Greek text was prepared by B. Laourdas and the Translation which I am using here was done by C. Mango. In the new edition this homily is numbered as the thirteenth.

Arian leaders and exposing their tactics in defending and spreading them, Photius compared the Arians with the Iconoclasts:

“Such are the tactics of heretics; for they have the serpent for teacher, who, having mixed the poison of death with disobedience, under the pretext of solicitude and kindness, filled our common ancestors with pollution, and drove them away from life in paradise. These men too first simulate piety, then little by little disclose their irreverence, while dissembling the insolence of blasphemy with newfangled and ambiguous words; when they accustom the audience to the disguised irreverence, then they spew out into the midst the pure poison of impiety, having prepared disaster for themselves and those that obey them.

“One may observe the Iconoclasts using the same device and base artifice as the Arians; for they too do not reveal at once or all together the goal of their intention, but devise grades of impiety, until they reach the very summit of evil. It is fitting to consider here the similarity between the [two] heresies. The Arians alleged that the word *Homoousios* [of the same nature] was a cause of offense to most people; the Iconoclasts started by saying that the depicting of images down below, near the ground, was a cause of error to the simple-minded. The Arians: because, instead of *Homoousios*, this corporeal and lowly word, it is proper to say *Homoeousios* [of like nature] of the Father and the Son, this being somehow elevated and more fitting for the incorporeal, and avoiding the division of substance; the Iconoclasts: because, instead of depicting images down below, near the ground, they should stand in an elevated position, for this is more fitting for images, and avoids the reproach of deceit. The Arians: *Homoeousios* is not proper either, but instead of it we must say *homoion* [like], having altogether cut off *ousia* [nature]. The Iconoclasts: It is not proper to revere even pictures which are high up, but to let them stand only on account of the depicted narrative, reverence being altogether spewed out. The Arians: the word *Homoousios* is unattested. The Iconoclasts: The worship of images is unattested. The Arians: the Son should be called ‘unlike’ a creation and a work, while the words *Homoousios*, *ousia*, and *Homoeousios* should be altogether banished from the Church. The Iconoclasts: images should be called vain idols, and their making, representation and worship should be altogether banished from the Church. The Arians: neither the Lord’s words in the Gospels, nor the divine apostles, nor the Old Testament give any authority at all to say *Homoousios*, *Homoeousios* or *ousia* about the Father and the Son. The Iconoclasts: neither the Lord’s words in the Gospels, nor the divine apostles, nor the Old Testament give authority for the making, representation or worship of images.

"Is it small, the resemblance and imitation which the sons have of the fathers, the successors of the leaders, the pupils of the teachers? The former raged against Christ; the latter have arrayed themselves against His image. The former set at nought the men with whom they had ratified the first Nicene Council, as well as the Council itself. The latter have scoffed at the men with whom they had held the second Nicene Council, as well as the Council itself. The former charged with impiety the men who had baptized them, and had ordained them priests by imposition of hands, and whom they called their fathers; the latter likewise spread the monstrous tale that the men who had ordained them, and celebrated holy baptism over them, were idolaters. The former, progressing by degrees of blasphemy, fell into ultimate godlessness, having deprived the Son of the Father's substance. The latter, having distributed their blasphemy according to the degree of their wickedness, slipped into the ultimate impiety, having, in their folly against the images, banished from the Church the honor and reverence due to Christ."

It is remarkable that the Patriarch makes iconoclasm parallel to Arianism, the first and most abhorred heresy, and that he compares the Second Council of Nicaea, which defined the cult of images, with the First Council of Nicaea which was regarded as the most important and most venerable of the Eastern Church. This indicates how much he was preoccupied with the suppression of the last vestiges of iconoclasm.

This and the preceding homily most probably date from the first patriarchate of Photius. This seems to be indicated by the invitation addressed by Photius at the end of the homily to all dissidents: "Thinking and believing in this wise, let us spew out every heretical conspiracy, and abominate every schismatic wickedness. Let us hate mutual dissension, remembering the aforesaid, and how great a harvest of evils internal seditions begat. Let none among you say, 'I am of Paul, and I am of Cephas,' [I Cor. 1:12] and I am of so and so, or so and so; 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law' [Gal. 3:13] by his own blood: of Christ we both are and bear the name. Christ was crucified for us, and suffered death, was buried and arose, that He may unite them that stand wide and far apart, having divinely established one baptism, one faith, and one Catholic and Apostolic Church. This is the core of Christ's residence among men. This is the achievement of that extreme and ineffable renovation. He who attempts to tear down or cut away any of these things, either by the love of a most impious heresy, or the pride of schismatic madness, such a man arrays himself against Christ's incarnation, arms himself against the common salvation, opposes His achievements, and, broken off from union with Him and torn away from

the Lord's body, the Church, he is enrolled with the opposite side, and, having rent his members from the Bride Church, he makes them members of the harlot conventicle."⁴²

The schismatics whom Photius calls back to the Church, are the fanatic Ignatians who refused to acknowledge Photius as legitimate Patriarch. They were condemned and branded as schismatics by the Council of 861, and this homily may have been pronounced soon after this year. The heretics who are also invited to return to the Church can be only the iconoclasts who were also condemned by the same Council.

In the homily mentioned above, delivered in the presence of the Emperor Michael III and the co-Emperor Basil, at the unveiling of the image of the Holy Virgin with Child in the church of Hagia Sophia, Photius also attacked the iconoclasts and their doctrine. It will not be amiss to quote the relevant passages:

"The cause of this celebration . . . is the following. Splendid piety erecting trophies against belief hostile to Christ; impiety lying low, stripped of her very last hopes; and the ungodly ideas of those half-barbarous and bastard clans, which have crept on to the Roman throne (who were an insult and a disgrace to the imperial line) — that hateful abomination being branded for all to see."

After describing the artistic representation of the Holy Virgin, the Patriarch strikes again at the hatred of images displayed by the iconoclastic emperors of the Isaurian dynasty:

"They have stripped the Church, Christ's bride, of her own ornaments, and have wantonly inflicted bitter wounds on her, wherewith her face was scarred, and she was naked, as it were, and unsightly, and afflicted by those many wounds, — seeking in their rage to submerge her in oblivion, in this too simulating Jewish folly. Still bearing on her body the scars of these wounds, in testimony of the Isaurian and godless purpose, and wiping them off, and in their stead putting on the splendor of her own glory, she now regains her ancient dignity, and sheds off the flat mockery of those who have raged against her, pitying their truly absurd madness. . . . And so, as the eye of the universe, this celebrated and sacred church, looked sullen, as it were, with the visual mysteries scraped off (for it had not yet received the privilege of pictorial restoration), it shed but faint rays from its face to visitors, and in this respect the countenance of Orthodoxy appeared gloomy. . . ."

Now, thanks to the intervention of the Emperor Michael III, the Church

⁴² S. Aristarchis, *op. cit.*, II, 283–286. Homily fourteen in the forthcoming edition.

“has escaped the blows, has been freed of her wounds, has cast off all blemish, has precipitated her detractors into Hell, has raised those who had sung her praises. And there is no spot in her [cf. Song of Songs 4:7]. She has overcome the blemishes wherewith a foul hand has maimed and spotted her whole body.”

It should be stressed that Photius describes iconoclasm here as a barbarous idea invented by foreigners — the Isaurian dynasty. The logical conclusion from his statement is that pictorial art is congenial to the Greek soul which is now, after the victories over the Iconoclasts, coming to itself. After depicting the beauty of the unveiled image of the Holy Virgin with Child, Photius shows the importance of pictorial representation in Christian instruction:

“Christ has come to us in the flesh and was borne in the arms of His mother: This is seen and confirmed and proclaimed on pictures, the teaching made clear through seeing it with our own eyes, and impelling the spectator to unhesitating assent. Does a man hate the teaching through pictures? Then how has he not previously rejected and hated the message of the Gospels? Just as speech is transmitted by hearing, so a form by the faculty of sight is imprinted upon the tablets of the soul, giving to those whose apprehension is not soiled by wicked doctrines, a representation of knowledge concordant with piety. Martyrs have fought for the love of God, and have shown with their blood the dearest of their zeal, and their memory is contained in books. These things are seen enacted on pictures, also, which make the martyrdom of these blessed men more vivid to learn than from the written word. Others still alive have had their flesh burnt, making propitious their sacrifice of prayer and fasting and other labors. These things are conveyed by speech and by pictures, but it is the spectators rather than the bearers who are drawn to imitation. The Virgin is holding the Creator in her arms as an infant. Who is it that upon seeing this or hearing it, will not be astonished by the magnitude of the mystery and will not rise up to laud the ineffable condescension which surpasses all words? For even if the one introduces the other, yet, rather than the learning which penetrates through the ears, the apprehension through sight is shown in very fact to be far superior. Has a man lent his ear to a story? Has the intelligence visualized it and drawn to itself what has been heard? Then, judged with sober care, it is deposited in the memory. No less — yea, much greater, is the power of sight. For surely, it somehow, through the outpouring and effluence of optical rays, touches the object, and encompasses the essence of the thing seen and sends it on to the mind, to be forwarded thence to the memory for the unfailing concentration of knowledge. Has

the mind seen? Has it grasped? Has it visualized? Then it has easily transmitted the forms to the memory."

These words are certainly a very able apology for pictorial representations of Christian doctrine, for its better understanding and grasping by the faithful. The Patriarch's words carried the more conviction, for he could demonstrate what he was saying by pointing to the beautiful work of art — the image of the Holy Virgin with Child — which was being unveiled.

Then, Photius went on to link the written word in the Gospels with its pictorial representation in images:

"Is there one who disregards the holy writings on these matters (whereby all lies are dispelled), and considers them not above dispute? This man went astray in his veneration long before he insulted the holy images. On the contrary, does he reverence them and honour them with the proper respect? Then such also is his disposition towards the writings. Whether one treats the one with reverence or with contempt, one necessarily confers the same on the other, unless, in addition to being impious, one has also abandoned reason, and preaches things contradictory to oneself. Therefore, those who have slipped into clashing against the holy images are proved not to have kept the correctness of doctrine but with the one they abjure the other. . . . Abominable in their misdeeds, they are more abominable in their impiety."⁴³

All this reveals the lively interest of the Patriarch Photius in iconoclasm and in the eradication of the last traces of this heresy. It is not surprising, then, that Photius was anxious to have the oecumenicity of the Seventh Council recognized by the whole Church. He expressed his desire in this respect most urgently in his letter to the eastern patriarchs, dispatched in 867, with the invitation to send representatives to a council which should deal with doctrines spread by Frankish missionaries in Bulgaria. Photius says:

"I deemed it necessary also to include this in my letter in order that all the Churches under your authority be advised to add to and to enumerate with the six holy and oecumenical councils [this] seventh holy and oecumenical council. For the rumor reached my ears that several Churches, which are under the authority of your apostolic throne, count the oecumenical councils as far as the sixth, but do not recognize the seventh. But they put into effect, with zeal and reverence, if anything else, its de-

⁴³ S. Aristarchis, *op. cit.*, II, 294–308. Number fifteen in the new edition. See also above n. 34.

crees . . . It destroyed a very grave heresy, and had among its voting members men who came from the four archiepiscopal thrones . . .

“And when they all had assembled together with my father’s brother, a most holy and thrice-blessed man, Tarasius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, the great Seventh Oecumenical Council was organized, which triumphed over the iconoclasts or [rather] the enemies of Christ, and destroyed their heresy . . .

“It is therefore necessary, as I said before, to proclaim publicly with the six, which preceded it, also this great, holy and oecumenical council. For not to comply with it and not to act thus would, in the first place, be a wrong done to the Church of Christ [by those] who overlook so important a council and break up and destroy to such an extent the bond of union and the connection [brought on by it]; in the second place, it would mean widening the mouths of the iconoclasts, whose godless doctrine, as I well know, you loath no less than [the teachings] of [all] the other heretics; [in that case] their godlessness would not be condemned by an oecumenical council, but would be punished by the decision of one see [only], and so [these heretics] would have a pretext for going on with their monstrous teaching.”⁴⁴

These words indicate clearly how well Photius, when he wrote these lines, was aware that iconoclasm was still rampant in Byzantium and how anxious he was to eradicate it. A solemn recognition by the Patriarchs of the Second Council of Nicea as the Seventh Oecumenical was most desirable, and would be of great help to the Patriarch in his endeavor.

The Council of 867 is supposed to have been convoked mainly to condemn the Latin addition to the Nicene Creed – the Filioque – and Pope Nicolas I, but it should be stressed that it also dealt with iconoclasm and reiterated the condemnation of all previous heresies, iconoclasm included. This can be deduced from the homily of Photius which – so it has been often assumed – was pronounced at the Feast of Orthodoxy which the Emperor Michael III and the co-Emperor Basil I attended. The homily is entitled: “Of the same [Patriarch Photius] sermon spoken from the Ambo of St. Sophia, when the triumph over all the heresies was proclaimed by our great and orthodox Emperors, Michael and Basil.” A more careful study of the homily shows, however, that it was delivered, not at the celebration of the Feast of Orthodoxy in 866, or rather 867, but at another, more fitting, occasion, which could only have been after the Council of 867, perhaps at

⁴⁴ *Photii Epistolae*, I, *epist.* XIII, P.G. 102, cols. 740 sq., nos. 40–43. I follow the Greek text of Photius’ Letters, edited by B. Laourdas for publication by Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University. The English translation of this and the other letters is the work of F. W. Schehl.

the very close of the Council. A few quotations from the sermon will show that this was the case.

It is evident from the introductory words that the Patriarch had in mind, not a yearly celebration of the feast of orthodoxy, but a recent event, a deed the merit of which should be ascribed to Michael III. The young Emperor performed many deeds and has shown many excellent qualities for which he deserved praise. But, continues the Patriarch: "It is not my intention to enumerate any of these . . . Nay, not the capture and depopulation of hostile cities and the construction and rebuilding of friendly ones, nor the fact that he converses with those he meets with a joyful and smiling countenance, and has removed all dejection from every face by changing the fear of tyranny into a spontaneous love, eager to be called the father rather than the master of the country . . . not that he has extended to the citizens a hand flowing with gold, having driven poverty out of the body politic as no man has driven it out of his own home; and that the queenly city, which reigns in wealth, has spread the gifts of prosperity to all the subjects thanks to one imperial gesture, . . . not even because thanks to him this Church and the holy cares of holy buildings have reached an unhopd-for attainment and matchless beauty . . ."

There is another deed just performed by the Emperor, which Photius will celebrate — the victory over all heresies. In apostrophizing the Church which should rejoice over such a victory, the Patriarch continues:

"Seest thou thy beloved son, whom thou hast adopted from the very cradle and made emperor, whom thou hast bred in piety, and reared to manhood in reverence, and advanced to the same age as Christ? Seest thou him, what rewards he has offered thee for his rearing, with great interest, bearing thee novel and gay [gifts], and with how many and how great trophies he has filled this holy and august church? He does not bring thee Arius in chains, nor Macedonius a captive, nor Nestorius a prisoner and the children of Dioscorus, who barbarized the whole universe with a multitude of unnatural offspring, nor this or that enemy and foe of the Church, nor the leader of one or several heresies, but he has brought forward all the contingents of the enemy together, with their leaders, their devices, and their plans, dead and stripped bare, by one and the same blow of his imperial right hand. 'Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold thy children gathered' [Isa. 60:4], whom the bacchantes and harpies of the heresies and schisms had formerly snatched away, and, filling them with much corybantic frenzy, and goading them on, scattered on the mountains and cliffs of perdition. 'Rejoice and delight thyself with all thine heart' [Zeph. 3:14]: the Son is proclaimed consubstantial with the Father; the Ghost is included

in the same Godhead with them; the Word which has taken on flesh from a virgin for the common salvation and renovation of our kind is not separated from the Godhead; the natures in Him remain unmingled, and are seen to act in concert each according to its energy; every error and trumpery is driven far away, no transmigration of souls is vainly imagined, nor does a throng of demons, riding on myths, leap into the sphere whence they have wilfully fallen. Nay, nor is Christ himself under the pretext of due reverence bitterly insulted and taunted: this is a new invention, and a strange kind of contumely devised by the Evil one, to rage against the image while monstrously pretending to be tearing it apart in honour of the one represented, thus raging a double frenzy. No manner of impiety will henceforth speak freely. For our victorious protagonist, using the writing pen like a spear forged by God, has struck the plague right through the bowels."

The last words suggest only one occasion which the Patriarch could have in mind: the signing by the Emperor of conciliar decrees by which all heresies, iconoclasm included, were condemned once more. The same idea is suggested when, after comparing Michael III with Moses who ordered the execution of idolaters in order to save the rest of the people, Photius continues:

"But Christ's disciple has not freed the remnant from the plague by the destruction of fellow-countrymen, nay he delivers the sum total of [his] subjects by defeating evil itself and, while thrusting against it the spear of the pen, he shows all his dependents free from stain therefrom."

At the end of the homily Photius addresses also the "choir of patricians, honorable and reverend old men who along with such great generals and commanders were picked to be joint generals and commanders against so great and so many heresies, and have joined in bearing these holy labours."⁴⁵ He seems to have in mind the imperial dignitaries, who accompanied the emperors and were present at the last meeting of the Council during which the condemnation of all heresies was proclaimed in a conciliar decree, which was signed by the emperors and then by the bishops.

The homily is the more important because it gives us some additional information on the Council of 867 about which we know very little. It should be stressed that we read there no attack against the Pope or the Western Church. This seems rather puzzling in view of the treatment this Council has so far received. Of course, when Photius speaks about heresies and schisms, he may have in mind also the teachings which the Frankish missionaries were spreading in Bulgaria or the attitude of Pope Nicolas

⁴⁵ S. Aristarchis, *op. cit.*, II, 314-326. In the new edition, number sixteen.

toward himself and the Byzantine Church. It is, however, important to note that he did not single out these “heresies” and “schisms” in his sermon for a special attack. This same reserved attitude is observed by Photius in his encyclical letter to the Eastern Patriarchs, quoted above, from which it is evident that Photius put the blame for the addition of the “Filioque” and other western customs, branded as alien to synodical decrees, on the Frankish missionaries in Bulgaria. All this raises the question, in which manner and to what extent Pope Nicolas’ ecclesiastical policy was criticized or condemned by the Council of 867. Since the acts of the Council have been destroyed, we shall never be able to give a straightforward answer to these questions.

One can surmise that the Council of 867 solemnly added the Second Council of Nicaea to the six oecumenical councils and that, from that time on, the eastern patriarchs regarded it as the Seventh Oecumenical Council. The oecumenicity of this Council was stressed once more by the Ignatian council of 869–870,⁴⁶ but, in spite of that, the Roman Church still continued to count officially only six oecumenical councils, even after 870.⁴⁷ It was again Photius who endeavored to bring the Roman Church into line with other churches in this respect. During the fifth session of the Photian Council of 879–880⁴⁸ Photius proposed that the Council should officially confer on the second synod of Nicaea the title of Seventh Oecumenical Council. Cardinal Paul, the papal legate, rose and, accepting the proposal, threatened to excommunicate any who should refuse to number that synod among the oecumenical councils. The legates of other patriarchal sees concurred and, from that time on, all churches counted, in official documents, seven oecumenical councils, although in the West, the old custom, to count only six councils lingered, in unofficial documents, for a considerable time.⁴⁹

It should be noted in this connection that Arethas, one of the most devoted disciples of Patriarch Photius, manifested, at least on two occasions, a lively interest in the refutation of iconoclastic ideas. In his letter to the asecretis Nicolas, son of Gabriel, which is preserved in the Synodical Library in Moscow (no. 315, folios 52–54 recto), Arethas says that, although the iconoclastic heresy is defeated, there are still some “weaklings and simple-minded people” who are confused by the iconoclastic argumentation and who need a good instruction on the matter of image worship. Arethas gives then to his addressee a short review of the main arguments

⁴⁶ Mansi, XVI, col. 181.

⁴⁷ Cf. my book, *Les Légendes de Const. et de Méthode*, pp. 305–308, especially n. 5, p. 308.

⁴⁸ Mansi, XVIII, cols. 493 sq.

⁴⁹ See my book, *The Photian Schism*, pp. 309 sq.

used by the defenders of the image worship. He insists mostly on passages taken from the Old Testament, stressing especially the vision of Ezekiel.⁵⁰ The letter may have been written at the very end of the ninth century. Moreover, in one of his Scholia to Dio Chrysostom (Codex Urbinatus 124, fol. 12) Arethas marked a passage with the following words: "useful against the iconoclasts."⁵¹

The interest shown by Photius' disciple in the refutation of iconoclastic ideas is characteristic. As one of Photius' best disciples, Arethas shared, also in this respect, his master's main preoccupation.

The few facts studied above show that the danger of an iconoclastic revival in Byzantium after the reestablishment of orthodoxy in 843 was still considerable for more than one generation and that the liquidation of the aftermath of iconoclasm was not as easy as it is sometimes thought. The merits due the Patriarch Photius for the final extirpation of the heresy are more considerable than has so far been acknowledged. He saw clearly what was needed in order to dispel the danger, and he knew how to combine solid theological knowledge with a moderate and conciliatory attitude towards the heretics in order to win them for orthodoxy.

Moreover, everything seems to indicate that Photius provided also the main inspiration for the artists who were engaged in redecorating the churches with pictures. The renaissance of the Byzantine art of the ninth century started thus under the patriarchate of Photius. His insight and his activity were well-remembered by his Church, and for his fight against heresy Photius was rewarded with the halo of a saint.

⁵⁰ An edition of Arethas' works contained in this MS. is being planned by B. Laourdas from the apograph made by Oskar von Gebhardt.

⁵¹ See S. Kougeas, *Arethas of Caesarea* (in Greek) (Athens, 1913), pp. 42, 51, n. 2.